DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 180 EA 019 859

AUTHOR Daresh, John C.
TITLE Research Trends in Staff Development and Inservice Education.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 1985).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Inservice Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Literature Reviews; Meta Analysis; *Professional Development; *Research Methodology; Research Needs; Research Problems; *Staff Development

ABSTRACT

The status of recent research on staff development and inservice education for teachers, administrators, and other school personnel was reviewed in studies completed between 1977 and 1984. More than 400 articles from 23 professional journals and 507 doctoral dissertations were analyzed. For each study, the research design and procedures, purposes and objectives, and major findings were determined. Methodologically, the research is heavily based on descriptive surveys of the desired content and procedures for the delivery of staff development and inservice, as described by survey respondents. Most research is not theoretical and tends to make use of only one data-collection technique, the questionnaire. Substantively, as determined through responses to the descriptive surveys, the skills sought most frequently by professional educators are knowledge-level skills. A research agenda, based on gaps found in existing studies, suggests that future research should (1) engage in the synthesis of some of what is already known about the nature of effective training design; (2) carry out continuous review and modification of a theoretical conceptualization of effective staff development and inservice education; and (3) define what is the ultimate goal of any training and learning experience. (MLF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED292180

RESEARCH TRENDS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND INSERVICE EDUCATION

by

John C. Daresh
Assistant Professor of Educational Administration
Department of Educational Policy and Leadership
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John C. Daresh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA019859

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Mid-Western Educational Research Association
Chicago, Illinois

October, 1985

RESEARCH TRENDS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND INSERVICE EDUCATION

There is currently a paradox in American public education. Enrollments are declining in many school districts around the country, but public expectations for increased instructional quality, productivity by teachers, and educational excellence are at their highest point in many years. Clearly there is a need to focus attention on determining ways to improve instructional performance. Two ways frequently proposed to do so are to provide additional training opportunities to assist teachers already in the field to improve practice, and also to modify the methods used in the initial preparation of beginning teachers. While both of these suggested directions for improvement deserve attention, this paper is directed primarily toward the first of these issues, namely inservice education and staff development for experienced teachers. An important implicit assumption is made here that staff development and inservice education may no longer be viewed as a "frill" that schools and districts might engage in if or when some extra money becomes available. It is, instead, an essential concern that needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis in all school systems.

Despite this apparently critical need for more effective approaches to professional development for educators, however, inservice education remains as a field with few theoretical or conceptual roots (McLaughlin & Berman, 1977), little respect from practitioners (Brimm & Tollett, 1975), and a generally meager research base (Swenson, 1982). The view from theorists appears to be that the field generally lacks sufficient intellectual rigor to be worthy

of much interest, while practitioners often complain that what has been written has little practical value and application to problems faced in the "here and now." In short, serious attention has not been given in any way to how systematic inquiry and research may be carried out.

The purpose of this paper is to review the status of recent research on staff development and inservice education for teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. There are two specific objectives to be attained as a result of this review. First, the nature of existing recent studies will be examined through a description of prevailing research methodologies and significant findings. Second, a research agenda for the future is to be suggested, based on gaps found in existing studies. Earlier reviews of literature on staff development and inservice education have been conducted by Lawrence (1974), the National Inservice Teacher Education Project (1976, 1978), the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1978, 1982), and the National Society for the Study of Education (1983). Each of these earlier reviews served as an important milestone in the davancement of the knowledge base regarding professional growth and development for educators. However, they all differ considerably from the review presented here in that the primary objective of these previous works was not directed toward an analysis of the research design and characteristics of work in the field per se. Rather, the major emphasis in earlier summaries was directed toward the identification of effective practices and recent trends related to the planning and implementation of professional development programs. While such efforts have been tremendously important in allowing some synthesis of effective practices, they have not been terribly useful in enabling researchers to gain a perspective on strategies that might be used

in future investigations of the field.

Review Methodology

A systematic review of research on staff development and inservice education was conducted during the past year and serves as the data base for this paper. The questions which were used to focus the review were:

1. How has staff development and inservice for professional educators been studied?
2. Toward what objectives have most recent studies been directed?
3. In what directions might future research proceed?

Studies completed between 1977 and 1984 were selected for inclusion in this review. Reports of research were sought from two sources. First, Dissertation Abstracts International (Humanities and Social Sciences) was reviewed for the period of interest. This search resulted in the identification of 507 doctoral dissertations that dealt with staff development, inservice education, or similar related topics. Second, 23 professional education journals were examined for the same time frame. More than 400 articles concerning professional development for educators were located in the journals which were identified as regularly-consulted publications by a panel of experts, both practitioners and theorists, in the field of staff development and inservice education. Only studies of American teachers, administrators, and other certificated educational personnel in public or private Kindergarten through Grade 12 settings were included.

For each study, the research design and procedures, stated purposes and objectives, and major findings were determined. After the studies were

examined, characteristics of interest to this review were listed and are summarized in the sections that follow.

How Has the Issue Been Studied?

Four kinds of information were sought in response to this question. First, predominant research designs were noted. Next, data collection procedures were identified. Third, it was determined whether each study was directed toward solving some specific educational problem, as contrasted with a piece of research that was explicitly designed to test some identified theory from the social sciences. Finally, the educational roles which served as the foci of the studies were listed.

Research designs. The most frequently-employed research strategy has been the descriptive study, or survey research (60% of the studies reviewed). This was probably not a great surprise, given the fact that the majority of studies were doctoral dissertations, and there has been historically a high percentage of dissertations which make use of survey designs. The second largest number of studies utilized a quasi-experimental approach (25%), a function of the fact that many studies were designed to evaluate or validate training experiences for educational personnel. None of the studies reviewed made use of true experimental design which would have permitted the researcher to manipulate variables of interest.

One study used an historical design, and other studies were nearly equally distributed across the case, correlational, causal-comparative, developmental, and "action research" designs.

Data collection procedures. The most popular data collection mode was the questionnaire, a procedure utilized in nearly 80% of the studies. In

addition, the questionnaire served as the sole data collection device 75% of the time.

Other data collection procedures included interviews, observations, and document analysis. More than one data-collection procedure was used in fewer than one-fourth of the studies reviewed.

Problem solving v. Theory testing. Research is generally viewed as being oriented either toward finding solutions to specific educational problems, or toward the testing of assumptions and constructs of identified theories in the social sciences. The overwhelming majority of studies of staff development and inservice education (84%) were classified as problem-solving research.

Roles studied. The majority of studies examined specifically the role of the classroom teacher. A handful of studies (fewer than 10% of the total reviewed) focused on particular groups of teachers (e.g., math teachers, special education teachers, or teachers of computer science). Another small group of studies (47 in total) looked at the particular issue of professional development for school administrators.

Overview of methodology. After reviewing the methods used in recent research on staff development and inservice education, the following conclusions could be reached:

1. Staff development or inservice education has been frequently studied in recent years, particularly through the vehicle of doctoral dissertations.

2. Widely-disseminated professional education journals contain many articles dealing with staff development and inservice education. Few of these journal articles, however, report original research.

3. Most studies completed have had a problem-solving orientation and have been descriptive surveys which made use almost exclusively of researcher-designed questionnaires as the data collection device.

4. Most studies have focused on the role of the classroom teacher.

What Were the Objectives?

Completed research tended to fall into one of five categories or classifications related to the objectives of studies: Content of staff development and inservice education, effects of training or developmental activities on staff, the development of training programs or modules, procedures utilized in the delivery of staff development or inservice education, or the evaluation of staff development and inservice education activities. It was not easy to classify many of the studies due to the fact that many appeared to fall into multiple categories. There was, in fact, some degree of arbitrariness exercised concerning a few assignments. Nevertheless, some generalizations about what has been found in recent studies could be made, particularly regarding the two most prevalent types of studies, namely those addressing the content of staff development, and those which reviewed the desirable procedures for inservice.

Content of staff development and inservice education. Approximately 160 studies dealt either exclusively or in part with participants' preferred training topics and desirable content for staff development and inservice education activities. Findings that appeared to be generalizable across the studies were:

1. Staff development and inservice education is viewed as more effective when content is based on the self-reported needs of participants.

2. Desired staff development and inservice education content is concerned with topics of immediate concern to practitioners. A particular need was expressed in the area of how to implement externally-mandated programs, for example, how to carry out competency-based instructional programs. Of considerably less interest appeared to be those programs or activities designed to deal with less concrete, more conceptually-oriented topics such as how

to build a more supportive organizational climate for student learning. At a mid-range of reported interest were staff development and inservice education topics which addressed the increase of human relations skills, for example, enhancing communication skills in the classroom.

3. There appeared to be only a few strong relationships between selected demographic background characteristics of teachers and their specified staff development and inservice education interests. In fact, the only characteristic repeatedly linked to desired content was that of length of service, or experience, as an educator. Beginning teachers (usually defined as those with one to three years of teaching experience) sought activities that helped them to deal with feelings of uncertainty, frequent insecurity, and limited knowledge concerning their immediate teaching environment and the larger field of professional education. Teachers with considerable experience (more than 10 years in the classroom) often reported a less favorable view of staff development and inservice education, but when they expressed interest in any specific topics, these tended to deal with issues such as increasing awareness of student instructional needs in classes. Simply stated, the experience levels of teachers appeared to be important and accurate predictors of staff development and inservice education needs and interests. Teachers indicated a gradual shift through their careers, with topics moving from those indicative of teacher-centeredness to more child-centeredness.

4. Teachers and other educators wanted to be involved with planning their own staff development and inservice education programs and activities.

Procedures for the delivery of staff development and inservice education.

More than 180 studies addressed the preferred methods to be utilized in the planning and carrying out of staff development and inservice education activities. Many of these activities were designed to examine the issue of content as well. There were a number of findings related specifically to procedurse that could be gleaned from this large body of research:

1. There is a general dissatisfaction, or at least disinterest, with existing procedures utilized in the delivery of most staff development and inservice education programs and activities. Often, studies did not pinpoint the exact nature of the procedures causing this dissatisfaction. Instead, such evaluations appeared to be made concerning the general ways in which staff development and inservice education is "usually" provided, at least according to respondents in many of the studies reviewed.

2. Staff developemt and inservice education participants wanted to be involved with planning, implementing, and evaluating their learning experiences. The general finding expressed in many studies was simply that participants did not wish to have someone else "do" staff development or inservice education to them. As is the case with all adult learners, educators want to play the primary role as the sources for their own learning.

3. Staff development and inservice education participants indicated that they preferred activities and programs which made them active participants in a process, not passive viewers of presentations by others who "talked at" them. Demonstrations were more highly valued than lecture presentations where theoretical material was presented.

4. Staff development and inservice education is viewed as more effective when it is part of tarining that continues over an extended period of time. Short-term, "one-shot" sessions wer reviewed negatively.

Effects of training or developmental activities on staff. The next largest group of studies, representing approximately 15% of the total reviewed, were designed primarily to investigate the effects of staff development or inservice education experiences on teachers, administrators, and other educational personnel. Perhaps the only generalized finding that came from the review of these studies was that staff development or inservice education tended to have little or no discernible effect on the attitudes or observable behaviors of educators, at least on a short-term basis. Due to the nature of most of the research carried out, that is, as doctoral dissertations,

there were no studies that looked at the long-term effect of training. Only a few studies reported that a significant impact was recorded on the part of teachers or administrators after receiving training, and that was usually a slight immediate increase in specific knowledge after participation in a learning activity related to a very narrow issue such as procedures for implementing PL 94-142. One might draw a comparison between the worth of these types of studies and findings and the attempt to "prove" that a child is well-educated because he or she received a high test score on a spelling quiz the day after a list of words was drilled at great length. While teaching to a test would be a readily identifiable flaw in a study of student achievement, there are few similar restrictions and criticisms when one receives training according to the posttest.

Model development and evaluation. About 10% of the studies were directed toward the development and/or evaluation of a particular local model of staff development or inservice. It is also quite difficult to generalize from the findings of these studies. In nearly every case, the researcher developed some type of training module as a way to provide information to educators about some specific issue. After receiving the training, the educators were typically given some sort of a posttest to determine if they actually acquired the information. If they did, the module was termed effective. If not, it was described as ineffective. Using this assessment procedure for verifying the effectiveness of training, all but one of the studies found that the model developed was effective.

So, What Do We Know?

After reviewing the status of research on staff development and inservice education in some detail, it is still necessary to come to grips with the

inevitable "bottom line" if we are to get to the point where we can begin to propose some logical and legitimate directions for future research. Because this review looked at both methodological ("how") questions of research as well as substantive ("what") issues, let us see if a few summary statements can be made in each of these two areas.

Methodologically, the existing status of research is heavily based on descriptive surveys of the desired content and procedures for the delivery of staff development and inservice, as described by teachers, administrators, and other participants. It can also be generalized that most research at present is atheoretical and tends to make use of only one data-collection technique, the questionnaire.

Substantively, it may be concluded that the skills sought most frequently by professional educators, as determined through the descriptive surveys completed, are knowledge-level skills. More often than not, the knowledge-level skills that are addressed through inservice and staff development programs are related to issues that appear to be of immediate concern to practitioners. Thus, for a few years staff development and inservice programs were focused on what was the "hot" topic of how to deal with mainstreaming of students with special needs, or other issues related to PL 94-142. Now, there is an abundance of research related to microcomputers and their use in public schools. If this cycle continues, we can expect to see inservice programs directed toward how teachers might cope with national reform reports, or how administrators can provide for prayer sessions in classrooms.

The current status of research in staff development and inservice education is not a particularly exciting case for study. Researchers seem to

merrily engaged in collecting a good deal of information of seemingly limited benefit to the improvement of school practices, the ability of educators to be more successful in their roles, or the condition of staff development and inservice education. There are, however, some important leads to be derived from this analysis that should be useful in the establishment of an improved future research agenda.

A Possible Agenda

There appear to be at least three major areas that might serve to focus a future research plan. The first of these might be to suggest that we engage not in more data collection per se, but rather in the synthesis of some of what we already seem to know about the nature of effective training design. We have, for example, been developing an increasing awareness of the importance of the particular needs of adults as learners (Knowles, 1978). We have also a sufficient reserve of evidence derived from the reported characteristics of "effective" staff development and inservice education programs to give us a fairly predictable picture of what practices "work" and which ones do not. We simply need to look at what already exists as a knowledge base in the field and build on it instead of gathering more information about the same issues time and again. How many more studies need to be conducted, for example, to convince us that teachers tend to like it when others ask them for their opinions concerning their choices of inservice topics?

A second agenda for researchers might be to carry out continuous review and, possibly, mdification of a theoretical conceptualization of effective staff development and inservice education. As theories of motivation, adult learning, organizational effectiveness, and organizational behavior generally

are found to possess utility in the process of understanding and evaluating inservice for educators, they need to be given more prominent explanatory functions, until the limits of their rationality are defined, or more useful explanatory concepts are discovered. This phase could be called one of refinement of a potential theory base to guide future research activities.

Third, and finally, there is one additional consideration that needs to be addressed as any model of staff development or inservice education is designed, implemented, or evaluated. The core of any inservice model requires a clear definition of the ultimate goal of any training and learning experience, namely a determination of what will make an educator more effective at his or her craft. In its most fundamental sense, inservice occurs when there is a desired state towrad which the participants are encouraged to move. Simply stated, an important ongoing research issue must be the discovery of what the "end product" of effective teaching, or effective administering, or effective educating in general, is to look like. To not do so allows researchers to continue with a piecemeal approach which is directed toward the discovery of what features work here, and what practices work there. Unfortunately, such strategies never seem to add up to the gathering of much useful information concerning the overall picture of inservice and staff development.

Summary

This paper was started with the assumption that the accepted goal of staff development and inservice education is to be the improvement of schools. If that assumption is acceptable and true, the importance of this issue of professional development cannot be minimized. In addition, improved approaches to research need to be found. After all, we do not wish

to be trapped in a situation where we only learn more and more about less and less.

References

Brimm, J. R., & Tollett, D. J. (March 1975). How do teachers feel about inservice education? Educational Leadership. 30, 7: 60-62.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. (1978). Innovation in in-service education and training of teachers: Practice and theory. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. (1982). Innovation in in-service education and training of teachers: Summary report. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Joyce, B. R., Howey, K. R., Yarger, S. H., Hill, W. C., Waterman, F. T., Vance, B. A., Parker, D. W., & Baker, M. G. (1976). Issues to face. (Inservice Teacher Education Project Report No. 1). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching.

Knowles, M. P. (1978). The adult learner: A neglected species. Houston: Gulf Publishing.

Lawrence, G., Baker, D., Hansen, B., & Elzic, P. (1974). Patterns of effective inservice. Tallahassee, FL: Florida State Department of Education.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Berman, P. (December 1977). Retooling staff development in a period of retrenchment. Educational Leadership. 36, 3: 191-194.

National Society for the Study of Education. (1983). Staff Development. (82nd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nicholson, A. M., Joyce, B. R., Parker, D. W., & Waterman, F. T. (1976). The literature on inservice teacher education: An analytic review. (Inservice Teacher Education Project Report No. 3). Washington, DC: U. S. Office of Education.

Swenson, T. L. (1981). The state of the art in inservice education and staff development. Journal of Research and Development in Education. 15, 1: 2-7.